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ABSTRACT

Hagerstown Junior College, Maryland, has had a staff development program for the past five years. The major components have been evaluated, revised, and integrated into a gestalt paradigm--a total institutional thrust designed to insure that the goals of the college meet the challenges presented by the service area. Each component exists to foster specific objectives designed to implement institutional goals. The components are examined in this report. (Author/SGM)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: A GESTALT PARADIGM

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Introduction

In 1966, Garrison, working under a grant awarded to the AACJC by the United States Steel Foundation, summarized the issues and problems facing community college faculty. A recurring concern of those faculty surveyed was "their keen awareness of the need... to refresh and upgrade themselves professionally." Garrison's analysis of staff development programs revealed that those in existence were "haphazard and 'off-the-cuff'."[1] Are these findings surprising? Not really, because the decade of the 1960's was one of unprecedented expansion for the community college. The practical challenge was to provide education for the seemingly endless stream of students and the needs of the college staff seemed to be of secondary importance.

With the onset of the 1970's, however, the growth curve leveled off. Institutional priorities shifted. No longer was the challenge that of recruiting staff for the ever-increasing student population. Now it became crucial to insure the quality of existing personnel. In 1971, the President's Advisory Council for Education Professions Development undertook a survey of the personnel needs of the community college. The project report, Teachers for Tomorrow[2], identified staff development as the challenge to be met during the current decade.

What is staff development? A definition is not easy. During the era of growth, community colleges drew upon a tripartite manpower pool. Staff members were recruited from graduate degree programs, secondary school faculties, and business-industrial organizations. Each component brought its own perceptions of the mission of the community college.

Now that development has succeeded growth, the task becomes one of blending these diverse perceptions into a unified commitment to institutional goals. Simultaneously, the unique, creative potential of each staff member must be nurtured. Staff development, then, is a process of defining and developing commitment to institutional goals while maintaining individual growth and vitality.

The foregoing analysis is quite theoretical. Can it be made operational? Hagerstown Junior College, (HJC), Hagerstown, Maryland, has had a staff development program for the past five years. The major components have been evaluated, revised, and integrated into a gestalt paradigm - a total institutional thrust designed to insure that the goals of the college meet the challenges presented by the service area. Each component exists to foster specific objectives designed to implement institutional goals. It is germane to examine each component.

Program Development

Schultz, in his guidelines for effective staff development, highlights several "musts" for effective program development.[3] The two most important are: one, initial planning must begin with established institutional purposes and commitments. Any other basis creates divisiveness and dysfunction within the college. Two, the focus for the program must be those changes which the institution wishes to make and the directions which it seeks to take. Any other focus creates the phenomenon of team members pulling on opposite directions. The result is a static environment. These preconditions underscore the need for planning and unity of effort.

HJC instituted a yearly goal setting session for its staff development program. Through a process of revolving participation, a task force of

faculty, student development personnel, and administrators is convened to define the objectives for the program. These individuals serve as communication links to the college coustituencies they come from. Such processes as the Delphi Technique, brainstorming, the Diad pyramid, and heterogeneous grouping have been used to arrive at these objectives. Certain parameters, however, remain constant. The task force begins with the published mission statement and goals of the college. Each task force member surveys the perceptions of his constituency. The topic selected emerges from an analysis of the convergent need-dispositions of the college community. Such topics as compensatory education, inter-disciplinary humanities instruction, institutional communication processes, and faculty-staff evaluation have emerged from the process. The objectives emanate from an assessment of where the college is and would like to be vis a vis the topic. Once the focus for the year is determined, the task force serves as a steering committee.

Program Components

The philosophical perspective which determines the configuration of each year's program closely parallels the ideas of Zion and Sutton.[4] The components are designed to produce the maximum growth and development possible for every member of the college community. The reason is simple: each person's commitment to the college mission develops in direct proportion to the personal benefits accruing from his membership and participation. A balance is sought between specific and general involvement to achieve what Schultz identifies as the multiplier effect.[5] All staff participate sufficiently to identify with the topic. Those who are involved in specific activities are encouraged to become dissemination links for the rest of the staff. Regularly scheduled mechanisms exist to facilitate this dissemination function. The components are the essence of

HJC's staff development model.

The workshop component involves the entire college staff. Three workshops are scheduled annually. They are usually four days in duration, and occur in the early fall, between semesters (usually in January), and late May. The organizational mode is flexible. Generally, the initial, or fall, workshop begins with a key-note consultant. The individual is selected for his expertise in the year's topic. He addresses the entire staff and tries to define the parameters of the topic and set the tone for the task ahead. The steering committee is responsible for preparing the key-note consultant. The individual must be made familiar with the idiosyncratic profile of the college. The more aware he is of specific aspects of the institution, the more germane his remarks will be.

Depending upon time constraints, the key-note consultant may work with selected task groups during the workshop. The resultant "halo effect" can produce valuable insights and commitment. If it is not feasible, steering committee members perform the function. In effect, the initial workshop of the year seeks to insure that planning has permeated the college and to initiate work on the task objectives.

The mid-year workshop serves a planning and monitoring function. During the workshop, plans for the yearly topical seminar are formulated. Also, a series of staff seminars are conducted to determine progress toward the task objectives. By now, the activities of the steering committee are being supplemented by emergent staff. Those individuals who have achieved specific plateaus within the objectives context present their results. Further, seminar participants monitor progress toward the general goal and recommend revision or redirection if it appears warranted. The entire college community is apprised of progress. The workshop renews the

enthusiasm of college staff members. The critical nature of a mid-point activity has been demonstrated in the HJC experience.

The end-of-year workshop is an evaluation session for the staff development program. The stated objectives are measured against accomplishment. The general session is designed so that specific task groups inform the college community of their achievements and recommendations. General discussion of the techniques of accomplishment as well as the outcomes is encouraged. Finally, the future direction of the particular project is discussed by the steering committee and representatives of the task groups. The result is a dimension of closure and direction necessary for institutional self-renewal.

A tangentially related activity also occurs during the end-of-year workshop. The steering committee is selected for the following year. The process of topic selection is initiated and PERT analysis takes place during the first meeting. In essence then, the process is regenerative. After four complete cycles, the effectiveness and efficiency for college and staff development has been established.

The topical seminar component is a vital part of staff development. At the mid-year workshop, members of the steering committee and selected representatives of the task groups, usually 15 to 18 in number, are selected to participate in a two day seminar. The individuals involved select a date and identify a facilitating consultant. The consultant is chosen both for his human relations skills and knowledge of the topic. The group is sequestered away from the campus where specific objectives, developed earlier, are pursued. After the activity, detailed reports are prepared for use with the rest of the college community. The results of the seminar are increased knowledge of the topic and awareness of the

inter-personal dynamics of the college work group. The concept parallels the ideas of Burke of the Center for Systems Development at the NTL Institute.[6]

The linkage component of the program is an integration of existing college structure with the functional staff development process. At most colleges various mechanisms exist to disseminate information. Hopefully, they are two-way communication channels. At HJC, these mechanisms, faculty senate, instructional division meetings, expanded administrative council, student development staff meetings, and all-college assemblies, are used to reinforce the staff development activity. Time is provided, as needed, to monitor, evaluate, discuss, or question components of the program. The result has been increased communication, understanding, and commitment to staff development.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation is an integral part of any institutional program if accountability is to be achieved. Three modes of evaluation are used with the HJC staff development paradigm. First, formative, or process, evaluation has been defined as the appraisal of material or procedures during their development. Its purpose is to provide descriptive and judgmental data regarding the efficacy of task modules. The data, when applied to subsequent module development, permits redesign or redirection of planned activities based on the predetermined objectives.[7] Each stage of the staff development program includes formative evaluation. Resultant feedback to the task groups is necessary to insure uninterrupted progress toward the stated outcomes.

Second, summative, or content, evaluation is applied at the conclusion of the topic year. The product of the staff development project is scrutinized to ascertain its viability. For example, the compensatory education project resulted in the development of a directed studies program. Assessment revealed that the program was ready for application. Virtually no revision was required to make it operational. On the other hand, the inter-disciplinary humanities program has required considerable work before the ideas grow into processes for student learning. The important concept underlying summative evaluation is continuity. After a topic is the center of attention for a year, a catalyst is needed to integrate it into the fabric of the college. Summative evaluation is such a catalyst.

The third mode is personnel evaluation. O'Banion clearly states:

> ...the college must consider the problem of relating staff development to staff evaluation. At the outset it is probably better to organize the staff development program as a separate entity from the formal, institutional evaluation process. ... Eventually, however, it will be necessary to construct creative ways to link staff evaluation and staff development, for in healthy and open institutions they are one and the same.[8]

The HJC experience validates the foregoing theory. Faculty-staff evaluation was a product of the staff development program. Now the two are inextricably interwoven.

Faculty evaluation has its central concept a self-analysis, goal-development statement. The other parts of the evaluation are cross-referenced to the goal statement. Since its application, the goal statement has revealed internalization of the staff development topic. Assessment of faculty performance provides another measure of the progress of the staff development project. The synergy emerging from the blending of process and product reinforces the integration described by O'Banion.

Administrative evaluation is a modified form of management by objectives.[9] Again, the quarterly objective-setting process, especially in the areas of self-development and innovation, reveals the impact of the staff development topic. Both faculty and administration have internalized staff development as the catalyst for planned and managed change at Hagerstown Junior College. The result is an environment capable of coping with the challenges of the 1970's.

Conclusion

Is staff development a viable concept? Does it meet the challenge of the 1970's? Harlacher has written that: "Society is only as great and as good as the individuals who comprise it and the Community Renewal College, therefore, will place highest priority on enriching the lives of all its constituents."[10] The staff of the community college are, most emphatically, its constituents. Through staff development, they are renewed and, in turn, become agents for community renewal. In short, HJC has found staff development an effective and functional means of meeting a changing mission.

What are the caveats? Along with hard work, two are sufficiently significant to merit mention. First, as Bender suggests, staff development costs money. Colleges contemplating a holistic, integrated program must provide funds for implementation.[11] In these days of reduced institutional resources and scarce state and federal support, such earmarking is difficult. Yet, without some strategy, an institution risks falling victim to future shock. Staff development is an effective antidote. HJC has found that the benefit outweighs the cost.

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